WILLIAM COOPER NELL

The chance-falling in, of the American merchantman General Gadsden, with the British warship Recruit during the war of 1812, and being chased by the latter into the Boston Harbor that very year brought to Boston a new resident in William G. Neww who had shipped as steward from Charleston, S. C. on the departure of the Gadsden from that part. Nell, the steward took up permanent residence in Boston from that time and soon took a young wife, where amid the manifold duties imposed by a young, ~~his~~ increasing family, he passed the remainder of an industrial life both in the interest of his family and race. His name appears not infrequently among the earlier Boston leaders in the interest of his class and the older residents still tell of his whilom zeal in the movements of that day. But it is the son, William Cooper Nell, the honor of whose birts and career Boston owes to the Gadsden's escape, and the forced visit of her steward, whose life and achievements we are to recount here.

William Cooper Nell was born in Boston (he himself says on Beacon Hill) in 1817 and with the exception of a year or so in Rochester, N. Y. may be said to have passed his whole career within the shadow of the Golden dome of the Massachusetts State House He was the only boy of the four childred in his father's family who reached maturity, and has the honor of having been the most accomplished colored man of distinctively Boston birth that had appeared up to his day. Oliver Johnson who ought to be called the pan-abolitionist editor, because at some period of his life he edited every one of the four principal antislavery journals, said in his " Antoslavery Recollections" which appeared in the Christian Union, and The (Boston) Commonwealth just before our subject's death, that it was his encouraging talks as a teacher with Nell when a boy in the Sunday School of Dr. Lyman Beecher Boston Church (in 1831) that first casued that youth to aspire. " Once when I made", says Johnson an earnest appeal to him to cultivate his powers and seek to grow up to a noble manhood, he said to me very sadly, " what is the use in my trying to be anybody? I can never be anything but a ' nigger' anyhow. But after the Liberator was started, I had a new and powerful argument by which I was able to inspire in my pupil a hope that he might some day be something besides a ' nigger'. He was ever a more receptive and a more ambitious pupil." How much this friendly Sunday school talk had to do with shaping the career of the future historian of his race's military achievements, can not at this late day be determined. What however is known is that the name of William Cooper Nell began to appear in the Liberator as early as 1833, the second year of that paper's existence and so continued from time to time till the Liberator's closing issue (32 years afterwards)

to which he contributed a farewell letter on the 29th of December 1865. Nell's first appearance in the Liberator was in connection with the bestowal of an honor upon William Lloyd Garrison by the Juvenile Garrison Independent Society of which Nell was the secretary. This organization was composed of colored youths who were bonded together for self-help and the cause of their race, and, as their name implied, they recognized in the mission of Garrison the elevation of their race. When he was on the point of departure to England in 1833 therefore this youthful organization appointed a committee of three of its members to have prepared for presentation to Garrison a silver medal in the shape of a heart and three by four inches in size as a token of their regard for him. The medal was inscribed on one side: To William Lloyd Garrison Esquire, the fearless, faithful and eloquent vindicator of the rights of the people of Color", and on the other: " Presented by the Juvenile Garrison Independen t Society on his leaving Boston for England, March 25, 1833,- " and was

presented with following letter which as it is deoubtess the work of Neww we give in fu ll:

Mr. Garrison:-

Sir- At a meeting of the Juvehile Garrison Independent Society it was unanimously voted That a committee of three consisting of Masters Solomon S. Holmes, John S. Shephard, and William C. Nell, be chosen to furnish a silver medal as a present to

you in commemoration of their high regard for your valuable services in the cause of humanity. They next proceeded to appoint Master Enock S. Stallad and John S. Shephard as a committee to wait upon you with the letter and medal which is presented to you with the sincere wish that your tour to England may be crowned with the most heart-felt encouragement as you very well know that your path leads onwards to victory. May the God of the seas protect you from harm on your voyage. You must rest assured that you will always have the prayers of our society. We cannot forbear feeling regrets at the anticipation of your absence, but we are sensible that your errand is one of himanity and that you have proved your self a firm and decided friend to the people of color. Withsentiments of sincere regard for your welfare, we have the pleasure of subscribing ourselves

Your obedient servants
Enock S. Stallod, Pres
Webster P. Freeman, Vice-pres.
William C. Nell, Sec.

As will be seen, Nell was the secretary of the committee as well as of the organization, a position which he filled in most of the

colored meetings he shared in throughout his life. It was shortly after this time in October of the same year that Nell has highly complimented in the papers for an address he delivered in his 16th year on the second anniversary of this same Juvenile organization. The address was thought worthy of publication by the editor of the New England Telegraph, who gave it in full in his paper with the comment that " we believe there is not one " white boy in a thousand at that age and having enjoyed no bet-

ter advantages for education could have done as well." A silver loving cup was presented to Garrison on the occasion of this trip to England also by the adult colored citizens. Indeed, it is pleasant to recall at this juncture that the colored people of

Boston not only gave this testimonial but also the money which,

to gether with that from their brethren in Providence, Hartford, Philadelphia and New York, made up the amount necessary to de fray Garrison's expenses abroad. And as this was the occasion of Garrison's first meeting with George Thompson, the famous British Abolitionist who not only became thereafter a devoted worker for the cause of the American slave, but brought also with him and introduced into this country the British plan of antislavery societies after which the great American Antislavery organization was patterned and formed ; the descendants of these early friends of Garrison may well be granted the indulgence in whatever pleasure may come from the contemplation of these efforts of their sires for liberty. It was Garrison's melancholy pleasure on this same trip to see the great Wilberforce for the first time and (oh what was worse) for the last time, too; for before his return, the great Englishman, already worn out by incessant labors, had laid aside forever the mantle which the young American alone was destined to wear. But William C. Nell, as will be seen from what follows filled an important role at more than one crisis in the history of his race, though not in the years immediately before us; for except in an instance or so in May of 1834 where he was one of the contestants in an oratorical exhibition for the antislavery cause, his youth prevented his taking an active part as yet

But authentic data for a life of Nell, even when a laborious research has done its best are by no means abundant. He is one of those moving spirits of a community who survive more in the comments of others about them than in the particular acts and incidents of their lives; for though we ourselves have lived for many years almost on the very scenes of his activities, have gone many times in quest of information wherever and to whomsoever we thought it likely to be found, our harvest of facts for his life has not been great. In fact we have utterly failed to find many of those little characteristics and oral traditions such as always

serve to point a moral or adorn a tale in the lives of distinguished individuals. The modest and unassuming nature of the man which always kept him making opportunities for others rather than for himself accounts much for this dearth of material. Add, too, that his well-known Addisonian reserve naturally led him to prefer the pen to the platform and that when certain that the cause of his race would be equally served by others as by himself, he pur sued the noiseless tenor of his way.

Nell's first real connection with the Liberator was his serfice in the office as an errand-boy; and his final promotion to the place of a compos itor on that paper. To this probably more than to any other influence in this early years we owe the very important part he afterwards played in the advancement of his race. Those brought into contact with the moving spirits of the antislavery cause, and what was better priveleged to imbibe their broad and enlightened views of humanity while putting their speeches into type Nell become elevated to that exalted sphere in which he ever afterwards moved. What time, however, he began his a pprenticeship with the Liberator, there is now probably no way of knowing, as the writers who could have given us authentic information on the subject, have failed generally to record it, and the memory of the older people of our day runneth not thither.

But an incidental remark of Frederick Douglass made in the controversy which culminated between him and the Gardens Gar Garrisons in 1853, probably furnishes the key to thes sim situation, for in the province of history as in that of specultive science often

x x x x A single Alif were the clue-
Could you but find it - to the Treasure-house,
And peradventure to the master too.

Douglass who in the occasion here in question included Nell with the others in the attack made upon the Garrisonians spoke of him him as being disappointed at his not being made successor to Henr Henry W. Williams as chief-man on the Liberator instead of Robert F. Wollcut. At this time of this change, according to Douglass, Nell would seem to have been longe Nough in the antislavery printing office to expect such promotion and was disappointed when the place went to another. Now Henry W. Williams took charge of the Antislavery printing office as general agent (the official title of the head-man) in June 1841, and held hat position through 1848, when he was succeeded by Robert F. Wallcut, who held the management for a period of three years - a not very extended length of service in such a posi

Wolcutt who served the remaining 19 years of the Liberator's existence. Williams was manager then but for a little ~~over five~~ over five years - a not very extended length of service in such a position. But Nell must have been in the office as an apprentice before this time, as it is not atall likely thathe would have aspired to the chief place in the office in the era now under consideration without more than five years of experience. We must therefore look beyond the period of williams' management of the antislavery office forthe beginning of Nell's apprenticeship there. nell in all probability entered the Liberator's printing office during the general agency of his friend Oliver Johnson who served two and a half years as Williams' immediate predecessor, or probablya year or so before during the old Garrison and Knapp partnership's management Read in this connection the comment of Johnson on Nell, which has already been quoted in partand which was reproduced with slight change in his life of Garrison (page 101) acquires new significance for us. Says he:

> " In that day no colored boy could be apprenticed to
> " any trade in any shop where whitemen worked; still
> lesscould he find a place except as a menial in any store
> or office. I well remember what amazement was excited
> when Mr. Garrison and his partner first took a ~~black~~ blackboy
> as an apprentice in the office of the Liberator. It was
> declared on every side that no " nigger" cuuld learn the
> art of printing and it was held to be evidence of ar-
> rant folly to try the experiment. "

There is therefore hardly a doubt that the boy here mentioned as William C. nell whose connection with the Liberator having begun thus during the old Garrison and Knapp regime, covered aperiod of more than a dozen years or probably from the late 30's ti the time of Nell's going to Rochester in 1850 to work on the Frederick Douglass paper. The following program which is doubtless his own handiwork shows him already a master of the printer's craft as early as 1846, and incidentally gives us a glimpse at the histrionic side, ~~another~~ another feature on the career of Nell

We have already referred to the sojourn of William C. Nell in Rochester as the only occasion of his living away from Boston. This residence which was indeed only a brief one covered but part of the years of '51- '52, and was the result quite as much of a search for health as a desire for work. Nell's constitution which was never robust, had now become thoroughly impaired by too constant application in the preparation of the pamphlet on the services of colored sldiers which proved to be the ground work of his history a few years later. He broke down entirely during the winter and early spring of '51 but doggedly persisted with his work until t it was announced ready for sale in May of thatyear. Butas healthgave no promise of a speedy return, he took advantage of the opportunity then offered him, to go to Rochester, N. Y. and join the staff of the North Star which Frederick Douglass was then on the point of enlarging and of changing its name to "Frederick Douglass' Paper" Nell left Boston for his new berth at Rochester late in 1851 and soon found himselffor the fiet at the head of a printing office, - a life-long ambition. In this this new home the young Bostonian found a antislavery atmosphere quite equal to that in the old; forevery spot in Western New York at all near the two midland centres of Syracuse and Rochester at that time had been permeated and exalted with the enlarged humanity of the Gerritt Smith's teachings. A letter or so from our author to friends in Boston show that he he felt as much, In fact one of these contributions esent to the Liberator early in ' 52 is the happiest thing remaining to us from his pen. There was a goodly circle of antislavery friends and abolitionist gatherings were everhwhere in abundance; and soon found himself quite at home there.

At one time along with Douglass he is guest of the Typographical Soceity at a banquet; at others he is oneof a committee in getting up meetings for the antislavery cause. Nevertheless he is not happy away from Boston, as this from a letter to the Liberator during the early months of '52 will show:

" I believe Henry Martyn once recorded his conviction thathe who travelled far from home in pursuit of health travelled on a fool's errand. How applicable this may be in the present case deponent is unable to say. Though not having gained my usual health, the feeling is sometimes mine that I may yet see the opening buds and sunny skies of coming spring."

It can be gathered from the tenor of this, Nell's sojourn in Rochester was not continued long after this time; in fact he was back in Massachusetts in the autumn ofthis year,

delivering antislavery speeches at Salem and other places of easy access from Boston Of this antislavery address in Salem a correspondent wrote to the Liberator onthe 17th of December 1852.

" I had the pleasure of listening to a very interesting lecture delivered by him in Salem a few evanings since. He held the undivided attention of a large audience an hour. while he laid before them facts and arguments of the most effective character. If he could be induced to deliver the same lecture during the winter in the large towns and cities of New England he would undoubtedly do good service. The interest and good effect of his lectures are not diminished by the fact that he is a colored man."

The suggestion to have Nell repeat this lecture in various towns of the State was adopted, and he in company with Prof. William G. Allen, the brilliant young colored educator ofMc-Grawsville, N. Y. College appeared at Canton and Danvers and several other places to great advantage during the winterof '53

But it will not be noticed that Nell's sojourn in Rochester was almost abruptly short, so muchsothat we can hardly tell its beginning or end, further than it began in one year and terminated in the next. And thecause aswell as the time of its abrupt ending is almost equally unknown, though from the exchange of compliments between Nell and Douglass their difference would seem to have grown out of the old Garrison-Douglass break which at some time involved all the prominent Garrisonians of that day.

Nell who began collaboratingwith Douglass about the time of the latter's announcing his change of views at Syracuse in 1851, respecting the pr-slavery nature of the Constitution, felt the awkwardness of his position from the Newburyport very first. bred and born amid influence of Garrison's teachings that the Constitution was a pro-slavery instrument he was not prepared to forego his life-long views on a short notice. But the immediate cause of the rupture was an article which Douglass published in his paper on the 27th of May, 1853.

The American antislavery Society in that month had again held its annual meeting in New York City after an absence of two years in Syracuse whether it had been convening for the past two years since the Rynders mob in 1850. Douglass referred to this meeting as the return of the Ark to tabernacle in his comment, and to its religious-like proceedings as giving a quietus to the charge of in

Douglass referred to this meeting as the return of the Ark to the Tabernacle in his comment, and to its religious-like proceedings as giving a quietus to the charge of infidelity usually brought against the soceity. He regretted the significant absence of Stephen S. Foster, Henry C. Wright, and Parker Pillsbury, though he thought that the absence of these men, noted for their bold and aggressive speech, added much in dispelling the charge of infidelity. Douglass did not deny the charge but rather admitted its truth, by implying that they had been kept away from the meeting in order to allay public feeling on the question. Wendell Phillips himself took Douglass severely to task at the first of August West Indian Celebration for not defending his colobarers from the charge. And Nell also sobjected seriously to this line of reasoning on the part of Douglass, and when Douglass made his appearance in Boston during August of the same year at the Joy St. Church he said as much at the same time quoting Douglass as having once said " Commend me to that infidelity which breaks the shackles from slaves rather than to that christianity which binds them with chains." And again when a motion was made at this meeting indorsing Frederick Douglass' paper he said he would like to have the Rochester editor explain his present attitude towards his old friends and coadjutators, before the motion should pass; further adding that Douglass' recent attitude toward Mr. Garrison was nothing short of ingratitude and unkindness, and that he hesitated to commend Douglass' paper lest it be construed as hostility to the Liberator and its editor.. Nell was seconded in his opposition by Remond and Robert Purvis of Philadelphia, who both ran up from the West Indian Emancipation Celebration at Framingham to aid in preventing Douglass from getting a Boston endorsement. But the objectors were defeated in an audience which did not reason so closely about the matter, or probably was not so much concerned ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ as themselves. The Boston colored people endorsed rather than censured Douglass and this was in a way a vote of no confidence in the contention of Nell and friends.

Douglass was greatly pleased at the results of these Boston meetings. He sent a letter from Boston to his own paper August 9th, accusing Remond, Nell and Purvis of trying to destroy the influence of his paper and himself with the people of Boston. " Let it not be inderred", said he, " from what I have now said that the colored people of Boston sympathize in the assaults made upon me by Messrs Remond , Nell andPurvis. Such is far from being the case. Whatever may have been the case before, the colored people of Boston are unwilling that a single hair of my head should be given to gratify the malice of the disaffected three. Their very opposition has rivetted the affections of old friends and brought to my side new ones." Commenting on Wendell Phillips' attitude toward him Douglass said editorially in a subsequent issue: The next step in this eventful history is what took place at Framingham a few weeks since. We were there asked, (unwas a menacing scowl) to say why we did not deny certain distin-

guished gent lemen are infidels? To which we simply replied " we did not because we thought we could not do so truthfully. The second day after that somebody spoke a good word for Frederick Douglass' paper in Boston, and asked at a meeting of colored people for subscribers when (taking his cue from Wendell Phillips) William C. nell with a harmless air, a bowed-down look, and a cat-like step, arose to put the colored people on their guard against sustaining a paper inimical as he alleged, to Mr. Garrison. Believing him to be " a tool" and being warm at the moment of writing we called hin a " contemptible tool."

Now it is not tiven to ordinary mortals meekly to endure such caustic strictures as these without an attempt at self-defence; and Nell claimed to be only an ordinary man. He, therefore, prepared in a short communication his side of the controversy and sent it to Editor Douglass to be inserted in his paper. The latter however refused to publish it, but returned it to the sender thus:

> " William C. Nell is informed that he having in Boston done what he could to prevent the circulation of Frederick Douglass' paper, the editor of the paper does not feel called upon to give his columns to the circulation of his speeches and letters. When a man seeks to cut out his neighbors tongue, he must not be surprised to find that tongue refusing to testify in his favor.

Nothing was left for Nell then but to turn to his old friend the Liberator, which gave his side of the question on Sept. 2nd, 1853. In this communication which contained the substance of remarks made by him on the two occasions in question he denied that he had said " I am the injured party here; I am on trial. What I did say was I am the persecuted party." Nell further said that the meeting referred to he spoke of Douglass as being " unkind and ungrateful " because I have long and intimately known Mr. Douglass - been associated with him in the publication of his paper - familiar with him and the old society in their day of harmony and cooperation - and moreover as I have, to persons present and elsewhere is speaking of his paper, cheerfully commended though not afraid to blame - it occurs to me that I am no less his friend than before because I ask him to explain his new position. He did not rise to defend Mr. Garrison or offend Mr. Douglass and his friends; the former needed no defence from him and the latter act, his " whole moral, mental and physical constitution" rendered him incapable of doing. He criticised Douglass' recent repetition in his paper of the oft-exploded charges of infidelity against Mr. Garrison and some anti-slavery agents because he would have that paper emit a a more friendly light. Mr. Douglass himself had called attention to the good that such speeches as that of Rev. A. T. Foss recently delivered at Framingham would do to remove the misunderstanding between the old allies.

" Happy indeed would I be, Mr. Chairman, if my word on this occasion would be accepted in this light. Let us compose notes by the wayside. Let Mr. Douglass cease his direct and indirect hostility toward his old friends. Speak well of his land to the skies any individuals or parties he may feel disposed, discuss and argue with all hhis is well and proper; but in doing this, let him not detract from and drag others down; for he and they though honestly differing as to ways and means, can both work in a general way for the downfall of our common enemy, slavery." The following letter will throw further light. We have given for the most part the salient points of both men's contention; and it will strike the mind of the average reader that there was very little reason for Douglass' refusing to print Nell's side in Frederick Douglass' paper. Indeed Douglass himself felt as much as he spoke of himself in a subsequent editorial above quoted as " being warm" when the " epethets" were applied to Nell. But no excuse could save him from the charge of being overheated when he wrote and when he spoke on this Nell incident. True he did not have Nell in mind when discussing the antislavery leaders in connection with the charge of infidelity nor did he intend to emphasize the infidelity of those men so much as to call attention to the fact of their absence through the designs of others. Yet, as the idea was abroad that he had criti cised those particular leaders for infidelity, and in as much as those men as well as other leading abolitionists were making the cause of the blacks their own, and for this reason had literally on one instance been beaten with many stripes", any criticism levelled at them by Douglass was ill-timed, and at the expene of his own race. Nell, a leader in that community was justified, therefore, in an audience composed of colored men in asking whether Douglass, a colored man seeking aid of colored men, meant to oppose with that aid the staunchest friends the race ever had. Not to have done so would have indicated that even the leading colored people were unmindful of their best friends - an accusation which none quicker than Douglass himself would have less preferred than that his right hand forget its cunning. Nell of course was no match for Douglass in a verbal combat of this kind; for he was not gifted with the easy flow and marvelous felicity of expression of the Rochester titan - and few indeed were ; but he had what was better. He had that happy disposition free of envy and vanity, which always led him to sink the pettiness of self in the larger issues of his race and harmony.

It was during the early months of this same year that the theatre-ejectment incident occurred. A case which attracted attention enough at the time but which has generally passed from mind by reason of the long line of overshadowing events that have since intervened in the onward march of the colored race. Briefly stated the case was this: Two of the Remond sisters of Salem, Sarah Parker, and Mrs. C. E. PUTnam, being desirous of witnessing the opera Don Pasquele then filling an engagement at the Howard

Theatre, sent by a Salem expressman for three $1.00 tickets to the opera. On the evening in question, the two sisters were joined by Nell at the theatre and proceeded to the family circle to the seats called for by the checks which had been given them in exchange at the door. They were met however by A. Palmer, manager of the house who asked to see their checks and on getting refused to return them, but instead told the party that they must either go to seats in the gallery or take back their money and leave the house. The young people, of course, refused to comply with either request, but insisted on having their seats. they even offered to take the seats and leave them the moment any one should manifest displeasure at their presence. The theatre manager would not hear to this but called in a policeman, Officer Philbrick, who ordered the party out, but they refused to yield their rights in the matter as they bought their tickets and had not done anything to be ejected for. Philbrick, it was testified attempted to push Miss Remond down the stairs, and in doing so tore her dress and injured her shoulder. The case went to court and was tried before Judge Russell, Chas. G. Davis, Esq., appearing for Miss Remond. It was developed on the witness-stand through the testimony of Mr. Moses Kimball, manager of the Boston Museum, and S. W. Sexton of the Germanians that their theatre did not draw the color-line; that in fact Palmer's theatre was the only one in Boston that did make a difference between patrons along race-line . The defence on the other hand held that the case was not brought in good faith, but was aimed as a test of the policy of this particular play-house. The court decided in bahalf of the plaintiffs, by imposing a nominal fine ($1.00) on both the officer and manager Palmer, giving this in part as the reason; " In a civil case, the measure of damager would be the injury to the complainant, including any injury to her feelings. The defendant's motive would be no defence. In a criminal case, the motive is the chief test of criminality. This is the first case of the kind in Boston and these excuses would not avail in another case." The Judge's decision was carefully written out in full though not very long. The case has proved an important one in the jurisprudence of the State, having been cited more than once in recent years. At that time it was the principle rather than the amount to be established and the plaintiffs in the case were rejoiced that they had been the means of adding one more milestone to the liberty of their people. The claim of the defence that the suit had been brought as a test case was not far wrong, as there is little doubt that Nell supplied the money which was sent through the Salem agency for the tickets, and men still living recall the fact that this was part of a plan which was at that time set afoot to bring the Howard management to books. This was one of the two occasions in which we have noted Nell's being in a controversy, the other being that which grew out of his short connection with Frederick Douglass

Nell, after his return from Rochester to Boston took up residence at 3 Smith Court, with desk-room in the antislavery office at 21 Cornhill. At the latter place, he maintained a kind of a intelligence office sending out notices ever and anon through the Liberator either of places or of help wanted, and of himself as an expert copyist, ready to transcribe on short notice any papers of documents for moderate prices. The years now under consideration constituted the busiest period of our author's existence; for in addition to his occasional contributions to the Liberator, he was industriously collecting data for the enlargement of his colored patriots in the wars of '76 and '12, was still laboring to abolosh the color-line in the Boston schools and setting about to inaugurate the observance of Crispus Attucks day.. These last undertakings turned out to be the most important achievements of our author's career. We have already mentioned that Nell's work on the colored patriots which first appeared in pamphlet form was announced for sale in May of 1851 about the time of his going to live in Rochester. That was the first edition, and was issued more as a means of aid for the author than for the amount of information in conveyed. This edition was soon exhausted however and a other enlarged and much improved in appearance followed it about the end of '52. This second edition was not published until after his return to Boston, and was very favorably reviewed by the press of that day. Even in the theatre-ejectment incident he was spoken of as one who had recently achieved some destination as an author. But Nell was not yet satisfied with his achievement on the colored soldiers; the field proved to be far richer than he had expected. He therefore set about with unwonted industry to exhaust the subject. From this time till the completion of the final edition he went in quest of facts and information wherever they could be had, searching in books and in files of old newspapers, and now by correspondence with those at distant points, and again making long journeys to out-of-the-way places. The rich library of Theodore parker stood open to him, and that of Wendell Phillips(no less so. In truth both of those great antislavery leaders aided and encouraged Nell in whatever he undertook throughout their lives. Nell was a faithful member of Parker's church, was one of the last friends mentioned in the letters from that great man before his death in Florence Italy 1859;and was ' as Longfellow said of Sumner until he had " taken his lamp and gone to bed" the Fidus Achotes to Wendell Phillips who with William Lloyd garrison, that other life-long friend, remained a little longer " to cover up the embers that still burn." The introduction which Wendell Phillips wrote for the second pamphlet edition appeared together with a new one by Harriet Beecher Stowe in the enlarged work. The book was published in Nov. 1855 by Robert F. Wallcut of the antislavery office, and is the last edition of Nell's work that was ever issued. In its final form the work is consisting of about 400 pages, and is and was more

more valuable for the early military achievements of the colored race than for its systematic treatment of the subject. Indeed the book is a veritable storehouse of all kinds of facts and incidents in the development of the colored race, and has been more or less the foundation of all the more pretentious works since wirtten on the subject.

But probably Nell's cup was fullest of joy over the results of the Boston separate school question which also came to a head in the closing months of 1855. This subject had long been one which lay closest to his heart. Indeed it is not too much to say that this was the first question along the lone of race that was ever brought home to Nell. He himself tells us that it confronted himat graduation in 1829, in the very outset of his responsible life and for the next 25 years engaged the serious attention of his maturer manhood. It would be almost impossible to give the full history of the agitation of this school question in Boston even in a larger space than we have here at our disposal; and shall content ourselves with a bear outline of the subject. To Benjamin Franklin the chief glory of whose life consists in his having reduced the daily practice of mankind to a common-sense basis belongs in part the honor of abolishing the color-line in the Boston public schools for it was the indignation felt by a colored boy at being denied th the merited honor of the medal which the munificence of Franklin made possible for pupils attaining a cert ain rank in the public schools that started the fight on the separate schools. When in 1829, William C. nell and two others colored pupils came to graduation they found themselves entitled to the famous Franklin medals which have been, through the gift of the philosopher to Bostob public schools, been distributed among pupils of certain attainments in scholarship for more than 100 years. But Nell and his companions of the colored school were not given the medals as were the white pupils; school committeeman Sam F. Armstrong gave them each each a copy of Franklin's life. In this way the committeeman got rid of inviting the three colored pupils to the Faneuil Hall dinder to which the white winners of the Franklin medal were then always invited. Nell, however, through the kindness of one of the waiters was allowed to seem to serve others as a fee for serving himself, and at the same time witnessed the honor done to merit no greater than his own. Mr. Armstrong who seeing the boy had managed to be present, became conscious-smitten " improved a prudent moment whispering to me (him) ' you ought to be here with the other boys;" this remark coming from the one who more than any one else present knew why the boy was not regularly invited to the dinner only increased that sensitiveness which he, as already indicated, always felt on the question of race discrimination. Nell from that day resolved to fight the separate school question in Boston till there should be no such thing to disgrace the city. Much preliminary work however touching the rights of the colored

race had reached in 1840. But in that year our author had the honor of being with Wendell Phillips, Wm. L. Garrison, Francis Jackson, and Henry Williams one of the first aigners of a petition to the city government to grant equal school rights to all children of the city regardless of race or color.

But as the thing was not yet favorable for a question of that nature - little or no heed was paid to the petition. The subject again lay in abeyance for several years until, in fact, George Putnam and some 85 others of Boston renewed the petition in 1846. The fight was brought forward by petition again in 1849, by Jonas W. Clark and several hundred other signers and kept up for some years before the school committee. But probably the strongest blow struck at this tiem was the suit instituted by Benj. F. Roberts against the city authorities for excluding his daughter from the public schools. Roberts was a colored man and successful printer by trade who has the honor of having published the first paper ever issued in Boston by a colored man. During February of 1847 when his little daughter Sarah C. Roberts had attained the school age of 5 years, Benj. F. Roberts made application to the Boston Primary School Committee for a ticket of admission for her in the hearest primary school to her residence. The Roberts family at that time lived in Anderson St. There were then two colored schools in Boston, one, the South Grammar school at Joy St. and Smith Court, and the primary school in Sun Court St. The little girl was eligible for admission to the Smith school, but the other school was so far away (in the North End) that it seemed out of the question for the parents to think of sending the child there. As, however, there were primary schools between her home and the Smith School, application was made for admission to a school nearer the child's residence than either of the colored schools. The request was first made to a sub-division of the school committee and then to that body as a whole, and was each time denied. Roberts renewed his application the next year April 1848) and when it was refused sent his child without the ticket of admission to the nearest school. The little girl was not admitted to the school but sent home by the teacher. Roberts forthwith entered suit for damages against the school committee on the ground that that body was denying his child the equal rights guaranteed in the State constitution. The case was argued by Charles Sumner Esq., not yet Senator, and Robert Morris, Esq., who was just beginning his career as Massachusetts' most successful colored lawyer. The chief points in Mr. Sumber's able and very exhaustive argument were : (1) According to the apirit of American institutions and especially of the constitution of Massachusetts all men without distinction of color or race are equal before the law (2) The legislature of the State makes no discrimination of color or race in establishing common schools. (3) The courts have never recognized any discrimination in the administration of schools,

have recognized equal rights of all inhabitants. (4) Exclusion from certain schools is an inconvenience to colored parents and children, to which whites are not put, therefore it violates equality. (5) Discrimination is in the nature of caste, therefore a violation of equality. (6) This school committee has legal power to discriminate. (7) The court should make the by-law of this school committee allowing discrimination illegal, emen though there be no statute law to prohibit it.

The case went through the court of Common Pleas, up to the Supreme Court where a decision was rendered by Chief Justice Shaw in April 1850. The casewas decided against the Roberts child, the court holding that as colored schools had been established at the request of the colored people themselves and were as well taught as the other schools, and were in operation long before this school board's day, and as white children as well as colored had to go to the the school committee assigned them, the school committee was not culpable for inforcing a law or rulr which had beeb found in existence when the City charter was granted. The case was therefore non-suited, and the matter as far as Courts were concerned ended there. Although the Court's decision sustained the school committee that body by no means relished the warfare which the colored people continually kept over the school question. They thought that something must be done to allay the agitation idea of changing the personnel in the teaching force of the colored school, which had hitherto been white, as a means of turning the hostility of the opposition into pride or at least breaking the force of the enemy's attack by creating a division in their rank. The principalship of the Smith School was therefore (in 1849) given to Mr. Thomas Paul of Providence, a former Boston boy, scion of one of the best known colored families, a graduate of Dartmouth College and a scholarly and experienced teacher in every way qualified for the place. Paul called to his assistance several young colored ladies and the change in the schools worked so harmoniously that the opposition seemed almost completely disarmed. For a while among the enemy of the separate school it would appeared that

" Those who came to laugh remained to pray."

The new teaching corps and all their friends rallied to the side of the school board, and under the skillful leadership of Thomas Paul Smith, a young man of much promise and nephew of Principal Paul, opened a warfare upon the opponents of separate schools with much success. Smith wrote to the papers, gathered data in support of the school board's position, and got up meetings to show that the colored people were with him. In one of his communications to the Liberator (Feb. 15, 1850) he said among other things: " We believe colored schools to be institutions when properly conducted of great advantage to colored people. We believe society imperatively requires their existence to among us." The writer then went on " he laughed to scorn" his opponents' attitude as presented by one William C. Nell, because with all their noise they could muster

only 227 names of men, women and children on the petition against the school while the advocates without much effort had 170 leading ministers and other adults endorsing the school. But though the opponents of separate schools appeared to be silent they were not asleep. They kept up a galling fire upon the committee holding indignation meetings almost continually during the Roberts trial, and finally put their children in private schools rather than endure they idea of having them boxed off in a special public school to please the committee. Up to the time of Justice Shaw's decision in the Robert's case, the fight had been carried on mainly before the school committee, as it was the ruling of that body and not any act of law, which had established separate race schools in the city. But from this time till the end (in 1855) the contest was renewed with redoubled vigor before the legislature. Well was the moving spirit in this as he had been in the other stages of the agitation

For several years he sent out petitions to friends throughout the State who were urged to sign them and prevail upon others to do the same. That which was sent out in the winter of 1855 and which was the last one needed was worded as follows

PETITIOND OF EQUAL SHHOOL RIGHTS.

The undersigned inhabitants of respectfully request the legislature to provide by due legislation some efficient means to prevent the colored children of Boston from being deprived of the equal privileges of the common schools of that city.

Legal voter Non-Voter

The friends throughout the State were requested to be diligent in circulating the petitions and to forward them when signed to

William C. Nell,
21 Cornhill, Boston.

As soon as the petitions thus sent out were returned, Nell would arrange these in order and go up " with his huge bedget of papers" to the State House. Charles W. Slack, Esq. one of the most active members of the legislature which passed tge bill for race separation in public schools said that Mr. nell furnished all the materials and the capital in the case, and there had risen up under the direction of the master-workman of the committee, the fair frabric of equality in the education of the colored youth of this Commonwealth. It aught to be said at this juncture however that what proved to be a boon in this school question though held a bane in others was the control of the State government at the time by the Know-nothing party. In the legislature of 1855, the legislature which enacted the law, there was but one member in the Massachusett Legislature not affiliated with the Knownothing party. The Governor and all were of that persuasion. Messrs Kimball Prince Swift and

Chas. W.Slack having been besought for aid in the school matter by certain wellknown colored men, - Rev. Leonard Grimes, Mark R. DeMortie RoberMorris Esq., some of themselves members of the Know-nothing party - responded with a rush to their request. Under the lead of these men, " The House", says Nell, ordered the bill to a third reading with an affirmative shourt; the Senate as readily co-operated, and the Governor (Gardner) signed it April 28, 1855.

The school law as finally enacted constitutes the 257 chapter of the Acts and Resolves of 1855 and was approved by Governor Gardner the 28th of April of that year. The sections of the Act which make its scope and aim unmistakable run in part thus: In determining the qualification of a scholar x x x x in this Commonwealth x x x x x no distinction shall be made on account of race, color, or religious opinions of the applicant or school." Sec. 2 " Any child who on account of his race, color or religious opinions shall be excluded from any public or district school in this Commonwealth, for admission to which he may be otherwise qualified shall recover damages therefor in action of tort to be brought in the name of said child by his guardian or next friend in any court of competent jurisdiction to try the same, against the city or town by which such school is supported." This Act aroused the school muddle which had scowled over Boston for a generation to pass off like a summer's cloud. The Boston School Committee backed and filled a little over the change but managed at length to come down gracefully by the opening of the following school year.. Accordingly in the following December, when it had been seen that all was working well under the new law, the admirers of Nell's untiring efforts for equal school rights made him the recipient of a token of their regard at a public meeting held for that purpose in the Southoc (Phillips) St. Church, with the venerable John T. Hilton presiding. On that occasion Nell was ushered by the committee in charge with the church which was crowded with women and children, and men fo both of races who had been his life allies in the fight for justice. The children were represented by Master Frederick Lewis recently dead, but for a long while in after years known as the master of many musical instruments. Lewis thanked our author in a happy little speechfor the great boon he had conferred upon the children by gaining for them the same privileges that other children enjoyed, and as he concluded stepped forward and presented Mr. nell with a beautiful bouquet of flowers; several other children followed with similar floral tributes until the scene took on quite a festive aspect filled with youth and flowers. In the midst of this, Mrs. Georgiana O. Smith for the committee of Arrangements, presented after a grief address, the chief token of the occasion in the form of a magnificent gold watch inscribed : " A tribute to William C. well, From the colored citizens of Boston, for his untiring efforts in behalf of equal school rights, Dec. 17, 1855." Nell responded in a speech of great felicity,

minimizing, as was his wont, his own share in the achievement, while he told of the labors of others who had striven to bring about the good results. Speeches were made by Messrs. Garrison Phillips, Remond and Slack, all of whom were happy and timely in what they had to say. Mr. Phillips adding by way of a little witticism that he was glad this reform had been carried for another reason. "We was tired of having Mr. Nell come to him with his petitions." It was left to Chas. S. Slack who had been a moving spirit in the Legislature for several sessions to gird the history of the enactment." He had remarked," he said, " " on a former occasion that it was a singular and somewhat unexpected thing to find so many anti-slavery men in the Legislature. "e did not know how it happened - whether by the providence of God or the accident of politics - but they got there, and (having an instinctive consciousness that they might never get there again) some of them resolved, if there was any way in which they could make their work on that Legislature, they would do it. They had sent Henry Wilson to the United States senate; had passed the Personal Liberty bill, and had barely failed through the Governor's veto to dismiss Judge Edward Greeley Loring from the bench because of his edition of Anhony Burns.. these measures disposed of the antislavery members cast about for something that should indicate their direct connection with the colored race and they found nothing that seemed better suited for their advocacy, than the measure for securing equal school rights to all the children of the Commonwealth. And when Mr. Nell came up with his huge bouquet of papers it was a very simple thing to put the manifold testimony he brought into the shape of a Report, and present it to the House

What, however, was more peculiar about the Legislature of 1855 than its antislavery sentiment, though Mr. Slack did not say so in his speech, was the fact that it was almost to a man of the Knownothing persuasion. The Governor of that year, the entire Senate and every one of the 379 members of the House but three (one whig, one democrat and one Freesailor) belonged to the Knownothing Party. Such a one party rule had never before been known in the history of the State, and has only been duplicated once in a free State where in Michigan the entire elected Legislature save one was recently of the Republican party.. What was still more worthy of mentionabout that Massachusetts Legislature was that contrary to former elections there had been a falling off in the percentage of farmers and lawyers, and a corresponding increase in the mechanics or artisans from the mill towns. Boston had long been noted for its aristocratic feeling and the influence she exerted on the legislation of the State. The artisan element was already becoming restless under the assumed inferiority with which Boston and the other old aristocratic centers were wont to regard them. Now according to Wendell Phillips' remarks at this Nell reception, the opposition to school rights always came from the City of Boston", and that once when he was before a

legislative committee on the school question, the chairman, a man ffrom the Connecticut valley, stopped him in the midst of an effort to prove that separate schools were wrong by saying " you need not undertake to prove that, I have got a nose on my face." This entire antisan element saw the absurdity of Boston's position on the school as this chairman did, and had aslittle patience with it as they did with her notion of themselves. Accordingly when the measure bot squarely before them, they made short work of Boston's separate schools. A beautiful illustrated copy of Uncle Tom's Cabin from the author was presented to Mr. nell on this same occasion, and a complimentary letter from Rev. Theodore Parker unexpectedly absent from the city that evening.

Aug. 26 '53

Bravely as Mr. nell stood forth at the first to stamp me with base ungratitude - the meanest of all himan vices - he was glad before he discharged " his duty" to disclaim the attitude of an accuser, before that audience. After a very few remarks, he cunningly said " I am the injured party here, I am th man on trial." And so indeed he was. He was his own accuser.

The Rochester Review July 19, 1853

It is of course known to most of those present that the time has been when Mr. Douglass sustained very friendly relations towards Mr. Garrison, and the Pioneer Society. It is also well known that now that relation is changed, and within a few months ppast his spirits (may) seems more than alienated, and in his paper he has made use of language which to many and certainly to me when considering his former indentity of interest with them

But investigation into American history proved a cascinating subject to Nell; for he had hardly completed his history before setting about for a revised and a more exhaustive edition of the book. And though this last was never published we have some evidence of his later research in Theodore Parker's copy of the colored patriots in which he had posted in an autograph-letter from the author which throws additional light on several subjects already touched upon in the book. One of the chief results of Nell's extended researches in American history was the revival of observing the anniversary of the Boston Massacre, that great historic event which occurred on the 5th of March 1770. and in which five men, Crispus Attucks, Maverick Gray, Caldwell and Carr were slain by the British soldiers. That October has always been regarded as the down of the American Revolution, and was at first for many years annually observed here in Massachusetts as the first distinctively Amiercan anniversary. But the coming of the Revolution with the natal day of the Declaration of Independence which found alike a common interest in all the colonies entirely eclipsed the Boston Massacre day: The cardinal doctrine of equality there proclaimed and success of the American arms in the field appealed to the inauguration more strongly than could the street-encounter. The observance of the Massacre day fell therefore into general disure in the course of time, and

came to be almost forgotten until its revival by William C. Nell in 1858. A committee of citizens consisting of Henry Weeden, Frederick G. barbadoes, Chas. L. remond, William C. nell and others, had already appeared with a petition before the Massachusetts legislature in 1851, asking hat $1500 be appropriated for the purpose of erecting a monument to Crispus Attucks, but an adverse report had been given the petition on the ground that a boy, Cristopher Snyder, and not Crispus Attucks, had been the first to fall in the Revolution. But though the State refused Attucks formal honors, it could not prevent the citizens from bestowing them. Accordingly in 1858 when there seemed to be a dearth in new issues to help on the cause of his race, Nell bethought him of reviving the observance of the Boston Massacre Day. That was unmistakably a day that bore witness to the colored man's valor, for Attucks who had been the first to fall, had been declared by John Adams, counsel for the soldiers, and by the several historiens of the incident to be " the hero of the night" and " a firebrand of sedition." Word of the forthcoming meeting was sent to the the several churches, for announcements and a notice duly inserted in the Liberator. In fact several notices of the celebration appeared in that paper, running thus: The subscriber invites his fellow-citizens and the friends of humanity generally to Faneuil Hall, March 5, 1858 for a public commemoration of the Boston Massacre of March 1770, the day which by the valor, patri-

iotism and martyrdom of the colored American Crispus Attucks and his associates, has been selected by history as the dawn of the American Revolution." Further details about the sepakers, the musical programme and the various articles of war connected with the scene were added in subsequent notices by " the subscriber, well, and great efforts both by other friends and the Liberator were made to make he occasion one of high moment. Nor did it fall much below expectation; for it was an unusually representative assemblage which gatheres in Faneuil Hall on the evening of March 5, 1858, to renew the observence of the anniversary of theBoston Massacre. The list of speakers included Theodore Parker, Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Dr. John S. Rock, and Chas. L. Remond, with letters for regretted absence from John Greenleaf Whittier and Rev. (afterwards Colonel) Thomas Wentworth Higginson. The programme contained in addition several musical selections consisting of a poem, Freedom's Battle by Mrs. Frances Ellen W. Harper, and sung by a quartette of young ladies now survived in (Miss Whitest) Mrs. Phoebe Glover (Miss Cooley) Mrs. Arianna Sparrow of Boston. " The colored American by W. C. Nell, heroes " sung by the Attucks GleeeClub, three of whom, Messrs. Edwin M. Bannister and William H. Simpson as painters and George L. Ruffin as a jurist, became famous in after years.. And finally a parody on the Red, White and Blue, written by Miss Charlotte Forten (Mrs. Francis Grimke) sung by a quartette of vocalists, one of whom was Eliza Smith, the poet in after years. Nell presided at this meeting and in his speech cited the resolutions offered in the town meeting by Town Clerk William Cooper in 1783, which subbested the discontinuance of the Boston Massacre Day observance for the 4th of July and which was adopted by the selectmen. His speech was otherwise replete with facts and data, many of which had come into his hands after the publication of his book. Other timely speeches on the occasion, those of John S. Rock and Theodore Parker whose passages at arms raised a reppect of each for the other most probably nefore entertained, and of Wendell Phillips who was singularly felicitous in what he had to say about the controlling motives in the writing and preserving of history.

This renewal of the observance of Crispus Attucks day as the celebration was not called proved of moment of most happy augury in more than one way; it gave the friends of freedom one more annual occasion on which to make public appeal for the rights of the colored race; and it showed that the colored race had not only a hero, worthy of being remembered, but the fitting historical sense to remember him . Crispus Attucks day, thus revived contin ued to be an occasion of great interest tillthe end of our author's life in 1874, finally culminating a few years later in a monument to his memory on the Boston Common, and is still observed by New England colored people on every festive occasion falling near the 5th of March.

We have just witnessed above that one of the selections produced at the Crispus Attucks revival was by our author, which fact calls up another interesting phase in the versatility of William C. Nell. For besides his happy foresight in detecting occasions for elevating the fortunes of his race, he was especially endowed with those lighter touches and pleasing fancies which may be quickly turned to good account for drawing-room or public occasions. These gifts not infrequently manifested themselves in the form of histrionic effusions or settings which showed out author to be possessed of quite a creditable dramatic talent. One of his most successful efforts in this line was the Crisps Attucks celebration in 1862, where the event was presented in 12 tableaux each illustrating a different historic scene. (1) There was the State St. scene where Attucks fell March 5th, 1870; (2) Colored Americans on Bunker Hill; (3) Presentation by Gen. Hancock of a flag to the " Bucks of America"; (4) Tillman destroying seccession pirates on board the Waring; (5) Fairy Grouping by children, embracing classical and mythological and humorous scenes; (6) Old Ladies Tea Party (7) The execution of Lady Jane Grey; (8) The nine Muses; (9) The muse of History (10) Genius of Liberty and Justice recognizing the worth of colored patriotism; (11) The Herald of Emancipation. The truth is in nothing did Nell show himself a community-man so much as in the matter of organizations. The very first appearance of his name was in connection with a society. During the early 40's he was a prime mover in the Adelphic Union, before which Theodore Parker and Phillips and other antislavery lights spoke at different times, and also in its successor the " Young men's Union progressive Literary Society" in the closing years of the 50's and had as his associates Dr. John S. Rock, Mark R. Demortie, John F. Hilton and most of the other representative men of that day. About this same time he was active in organizing the Histrionic Club; an organization which had for its object the cultivation of social pastimes among the young people and which did much towards developing amateur actors among them. It is of one of Nell's productions for the members of this society that it is told of the rivalry between two actresses being such that when the one had been assigned a particular part for superior acting, the author had to write an extra cast for the rival to ~~be~~ prevent a factional fued from ending the club.